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THE
CONNOISSEUR.

By Mr. TOWN,

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— *Lyrae solers et cantor* —

HOR.



HAVE just received the following letter from lady *Humkin*, the musical consort of my late correspondent Sir *Aaron*. I shall not pretend to moderate in family disputes of so important a nature, but leave each party to speak for themselves.

Mr. TOWN,

PRAY hear both sides fairly, before you judge; for (to use a vulgar expression) one story is good, till the other is told. I am, sir, the unfortunate wife of that

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inelegant

inelegant (I had almost said insensible) husband, who in your paper of the eighth instant pronounces and publishes me to be mad, stark mad.

I CONFESS and glory in my passion for music: and can there be a nobler or a more generous one? My nerves are naturally strung to harmony, and variously affected by the various Combinations of the *Gamut*. Some stay in *Italy* added skill and taste in composition to my natural happy disposition to music; and the best judges, as well as the best performers in that country, allowed me to have an uncommon share of *virtù*. I both compose and perform, sir: and though I say it, perhaps few even of the profession possess the *contra-punto* and the *cromatic* better; and I have had the unspeakable pleasure, of hearing my compositions and my performances dignified in *Italy* with the unanimous appellations of *squisito*, *divino*, and *adorevole*.

Is there any madness in this? Does not he better deserve that imputation, whose breast is insensible and impenetrable to all the charms and powers of harmony? To be plain, I mean my husband; whom I have frequently seen yawn, nay leave the room, in the middle of the most touching pathetic, sung by the most affecting *Signora Mingotti*, accompanied by the divine *Signor di Gardino*. And yet,—pardon this digressive transport,—how irresistible is the expression, the melody, the cadences, the *appoggiaturas* of that incomparable *virtuosa*? What energy, what delicacy, and what variety are in the inimitable

imitable compositions and excretion of the charming *Signor di Giardino*? What an *arpeggio* he has, what a *flaccato*, what an *andante*? In short, I may I am sure with truth assert, that whether in the *allegro* or the *piano*, the *adagio*, the *largo*, or the *forte*, he never had his equal. O, Mr. TOWN, what an irretrievable loss has this country sustained! My good man, among his other qualifications, is a politician, you must know; and one of his principal objections against these *virtuosi* is, that they are foreigners. He flew into a violent passion with me last Sunday night, because I had a concert at my house, when (he said) such bad news were received from abroad. I know not what he, and other muddy-headed politicians may think: but let him talk what he will of THE *Blakeney*, THE Governor, THE Admiral, I am sure the nation cannot sustain a greater loss than the loss of THE *Mingotti*; who, as the public prints will inform you, "is gone to *Holland*, till her affairs in *England* can be settled."

BUT however gothic my husband may be, I am fully determined to discharge the duty of a good wife. Accordingly, whenever he comes into my room, I sit down to my harpsichord, and sing and play the most soothing pieces of music, in hopes some time or other of hitting his unison, but hitherto to no purpose; and, to say the truth, I fear he has not one harmonic nerve in his whole system, though otherwise a man of good plain sense. When he interrupts my performances, (as in his letter he owns that he does) with wishing for the men from

Mother

Mother Midnight's, with their wooden spoons, salt-boxes, jews-harps, and broom-sticks, to play in concert with me; I answer him with all the gentleness and calmness imaginable. —“Indeed, my dear, you have not the least notion of these things. It would be impossible to bring those ridiculous instruments into a concert, and to adapt a thorough bass to them: they have not above three notes at most, and those cannot be *sostenute*.”—“I wish for all that, answers he, that they were here; I should like them better than all your *Signors* and *Signoras*; and I am sure they would cost a great deal less.”

THIS article of *expence* he often dwells upon, and sometimes even with warmth; to which I reply with all the mildness that becomes a good wife, “My dear, you have a good fortune of your own, and I brought you still a better. Of what use is money, if not employed? and how can it be better employed, than in encouraging and rewarding distinguished *gusto* and merit? These people, that you call ballad-fingers and pipers, are people of birth, though for the most part of small fortunes; and they are much more considered, as you know, in *Italy*, than all the greatest antient *Roman* heroes, if revived, would now be. Many of them, who would perhaps make a figure in the church or the state, have been considerable losers by devoting themselves to the pleasures of mankind. They leave their own country, where they are infinitely esteemed for their moral as well as their musical characters, and generously sacrifice all these

“ these advantages to our diversion. Besides, my dear,
 “ what should we do with our money? would you
 “ lavish it away, upon foundling bastards, lying-in
 “ women who have either no husbands or too many,
 “ importunate beggars, all whose cries and complaints
 “ are the most shocking discords? or suppose that we
 “ were to save our money, and leave our children
 “ better fortunes, who knows but they might, as too
 “ many do, squander them away idly? whereas what
 “ we give to these *virtuosi*, we know is given to merit.
 “ For my own part, my dear, I have infinite pleasure,
 “ when I can get any of them to accept of fifty or an
 “ hundred guineas, which by the way cannot always
 “ be brought about without some art and contri-
 “ vance; for they are most exceedingly nice and de-
 “ licate upon the point of honour, especially in the
 “ article of money. And I look upon such trifling
 “ presents as a debt due to superior talents and merit;
 “ and I endeavour to insinuate them in a way that the
 “ receiver may not blush.” — Here my husband breaks
 out into a violent passion, and says, — “ Oons, madam,
 “ show me a *virtuoso* or a *virtuosa*, (as you call them)
 “ who ever blushed in their lives, and I will give them
 “ the fee simple of my estate.” You see, Mr. TOWN,
 what a strange man he is, that he has no idea of elegance
 and *divertimenti*, and when he is so violently in *alt*, I will
 leave you to judge who it is that is mad, stark mad.

IN short, sir, my husband is insensible, untuneable,
 to the most noble, generous, and strongest of all hu-

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man passions, a passion for music. That divine passion alone engrosses the whole soul, and leaves no room for lesser and vulgar cares; for you must certainly have observed, Mr. TOWN, that whoever has a passion for, and a thorough knowledge of music, is fit for no one other thing. Thus truly informed of my case, I am sure you will judge equitably between Sir Aaron and

Your faithful humble servant,

MARIA HUMKIN.

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